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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI), EUR/ACE AND PRM/ENSA
USAID FOR OFDA - ROB ANDREW AND ALEX MAHONEY
ASTANA PLEASE PASS TO ALMATY USAID OFFICE

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR GFOELLER DECLARES DISASTER IN OSH
OBLAST, KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

REF: BISHKEK 1030

¶1. Summary and Action Request: Ambassador Tatiana Gfoeller declares a humanitarian disaster in the Osh Oblast located in southern Kyrgyz Republic following an earthquake on October 5, 2008. The Ambassador and the Regional Mission request that DCHA/OFDA immediately commit USD 50,000 to purchase building supplies to repair/replace housing destroyed. End Summary.

¶2. Background: On 5 October 2008 at 10:00 pm local time (plus 6 GMT) an earthquake of magnitude 6.6 on Richter scale occurred in the south of Kyrgyzstan (39.515 degrees N, 73.768 degrees E), at the border with Tajikistan and China. Complete information is still not available, but the worst affected areas are parts of Chon-Alai and Alai Rayon, some 220 kilometers from the main city of Osh. Rescue operations are continuing in the affected areas. Data made available through the Kyrgyz Ministry of Emergencies indicate that the death toll has risen to 74 people, of which 43 are children. The number of injured has risen to 142, of which 93 are children.

¶3. Chon-Alai has a total population of 21,800 in 17 settlements and Alai has 72,600 inhabitants in 57 settlements. The areas are at high altitude and sparsely populated. The main road to access the area has been severely damaged, limiting access to the affected populations. Limited access and communication with the affected areas continues to hamper full assessments and relief operations. It is likely that information will continue to come in over the next few days. However, the Ministry of Emergency Situations has been able to assess most of the settlements in the area surrounding Nura. They identified some 211 displaced families. Given the sparse population in the area, the Ministry does not expect this number to rise dramatically. The Ministry has in place a plan to set up a tented camp for 211 families. This number is lower than first anticipated.

¶4. Making the situation precarious, however, is the fact that the air temperature in the affected area is 0 degrees Celsius at night with strong winds. It has not snowed yet, but it is expected that snow and frost will start within the next few weeks. The most immediate need in the area is for construction materials for quick assembly/pre-fabricated houses.

¶5. During a follow-up coordination meeting held on October 8, 2008, the Ministry of Emergency Situations informed representatives of international donors and Embassies that they are continuing to assess casualties, damages and needs in the surrounding villages in the affected Rayons (administrative entities). The Ministry of Emergencies has evacuated 110 injured people via helicopter to nearby hospitals. Thus far hospitals have sufficient medical supplies. The hospital administration and social services

are supporting children orphaned by the disaster. Psychosocial support and stress management issues (especially for children) are currently their main concerns and they are seeking additional staff with the appropriate skills.

¶6. The Government of Kyrgyzstan and international organization response to date (updated): Initial relief efforts, led by the Ministry of Emergency Situations, were immediate and included United Nations Agencies, international NGOs, and foreign governments, including the U.S. Embassy and Manas Airbase (which have made available used clothing, drinking water, MREs, and basic medical supplies). The response by the Ministry and other donors has included the provision of winterized tents, heaters, blankets, food, mattresses, and money for food items. Additional relief items continue to flow in from the Russian Government, the German Government, IOM, OCHA, WHO, and UNFPA. The inter-Ministerial committee on Emergencies is responsible for the overall coordination of the response. Members of the international community have a seat on this committee to facilitate coordination with external partners. The OCHA Situation Reports is available on the OCHA Internet Website at <http://www.reliefweb.int>.

¶7. The Ministry of Emergency situations has followed up its original request for a variety of aid from the international community, including shelter, logistics, food items, non-food items (such as blankets, mattresses, and sleeping bags). The outstanding needs identified by the Ministry include: construction materials for quick assembly/pre-fabricated houses, electric power generators, kerosene stoves, kitchen sets, fuel/lubricants, family food rations, etc. The Mission proposes to provide building materials, which is the most pressing need expressed by the Ministry. No other donors

have stepped up to address this need. The Mission notes that all USG relief efforts are being coordinated in country and that it is aware and appreciative of DoD's offer of additional relief assistance. Before requesting additional relief assistance, Post wishes to collect more information on need.

¶8. Mission will keep addressees updated as additional information becomes available.

GFOELLER